

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

In the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus comprising:

 a needle cannula having a distal point, a proximal end and further having a shaft with a circumference;

 a tip protector having a base, the tip protector defining an opening to receive the needle cannula shaft and the tip protector is slideably mounted thereon;

 means coupled to the tip protector for blocking the tip protector opening so as to enclose the distal point of the needle cannula within the top protector;

 a gasket coupled to the tip protector base defining an opening of a size to receive the needle cannula shaft;

 means fixedly coupled to the needle cannula shaft at a predetermined location of the shaft for impeding movement of the tip protector along the needle cannula shaft beyond a pre-determined distance from the needle cannula distal point.

2. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a flash chamber coupled to the needle cannula at the need cannula proximal end.

3. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the gasket is formed in place at the tip protector base of an adhesive material.

4. (Original) The apparatus of claim 3, wherein the gasket adhesive material is selected from the group consisting of paraffin, polyester and polyamide.

5. (Original) The apparatus of claim 3, wherein the gasket adhesive material is cured by exposure to ultraviolet light.

6. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the blocking means comprises:

 a tab having a length sufficient to block the tip protector opening, the tab pivotably coupled to the tip protector within the tip protector opening and slideably engaging the needle cannula shaft in a first biased position such that upon removal of the needle cannula shaft the tab is free to pivot to a second position extending across the tip protector opening.

7. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the impeding means comprises:

 an irregularity in the needle cannula shaft circumference a pre-determined distance from the needle cannula distal point occluding passing of the needle cannula shaft through the gasket opening.

8. (Original) The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the tab is an anti-stick metal tab.

9. (Original) The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the irregularity is a crimp inscribed in the needle cannula shaft.

10. (Original) The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the tip protector further comprises:

 a superstructure coupled to the base;

 a cylindrical anti-stick metal clip housed within the superstructure defining an opening to receive the needle cannula shaft, the clip housing the tab, the tab disposed within the clip opening such that in its first position the tab is biased against the needle cannula shaft and in its second position the tab pivots to block the clip opening.

11. (Original) The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the tip protector is optically transparent, the cylindrical clip opening is a first opening, and the clip further defines a second opening extending over a portion of the cylindrical circumference exposing a portion of the first opening.

12.-14. (Previously Canceled)